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The practice of constructive alignment based on personal experience model in higher education of Pakistan

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Abstract

According to Biggs (2006), the term *Constructive* refers to concept of learners constructing their own meaning through learning activities, whereas *Alignment* refers to what the teacher does to make sure the learning activities and assessment are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes. The researchers incorporated Personal Experience Model to practice Constructive Alignment in Higher Education of Pakistan. The researchers mapped and compared features of all components of Personal Experience Model and Constructive alignment theory. The researchers found that implementation of Constructive Alignment theory is not easy, because aligning features for each component (such as assessment, curriculum etc.) do vary with nature of module as well module coordinator.

Keywords: Constructive Alignment; Personal Experience Model, Higher Education

1. Introduction

The Constructive alignment, one of the most influential theories in higher education was introduced by John Biggs in 2006**.** The term *constructive* is based on constructivists' theory. *Constructive* refers to concept of learners constructing their own meaning through learning activities. *Alignment* refers to what the teacher does to make sure the learning activities and assessment are appropriate to the intended learning outcomes. Higher Education Teaching provides an environment where students are encouraged to do self learning. There have, generally, been seen evolutionary changes happening on the horizon of educational practices such as from selected to mass education, from teacher-centred to student-centred; from narrow to universal; from conventional to align; from content coverage to maximum learning and so on and so forth.

The conventional approach is normally compared with the aligned approach in higher education teaching. In conventional approach, we lay emphasis on content and coverage; teacher centred educational process, separation of in-class and out-of-class learning, on assessment of learning and on proof of learning in the form of a transcript**.** On the other hand, aligned approach emphasizes on maximizing learning, student centred educational process, perfect learning, assessment for learning and it also lays emphasis on proof in the form of learning collection, most likely in

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electronic form. Problem Based Learning (PBL) is very good example of aligned teaching. An Aligned course, as compared to an unaligned one, does lead us to most effective completion of an educational process.

2. Fundamentals of constructive alignment system

In constructive alignment, the term system refers to a department, institute or classroom. Components of such a system are curriculum, teaching methodologies, assessment etc. Similarly, the curriculum is usually based on **I**ntended **L**earning **O**utcomes (ILOs), **T**eaching **L**earning **A**ctivities (TLA), and on **A**ssessment **T**ask (AT). On the other hand, the curriculum alignment refers to the process of interpreting learning standards, then developing learning objectives that are directly targeted to the standards. Constructive Alignment is an approach to curriculum design that optimizes the conditions for quality learning. Proper alignment of Curriculum depends on proper aligning of ILOs, TLA and AT. Intended Learning Outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning. (ECT Users ' Guide, 2005).

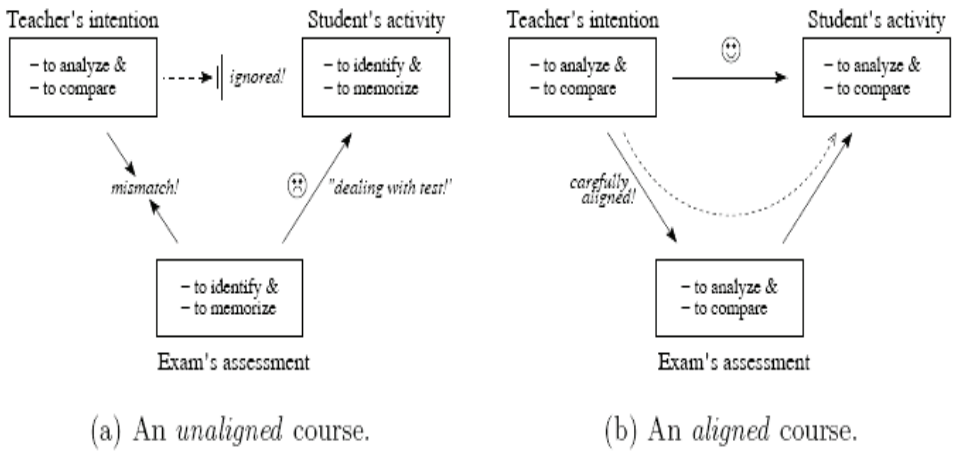

Figure 1 Comparison between an Aligned and an Unaligned Course

3.0 Personal Experience Model (PEM)

One of the researchers happened to visit University of Bradford UK, where he used Personal Experience Model (PEM to compare the UK and Pakistani high educational systems. Basic components of PEM were taken as following:

- Outcomes and activities.
- Curriculum Design.
- Assessment.
- Grading System.
- Feedback.

3.1 Problems in PEM

Main problems found in PEM were as following:

- Not fully knowledge about aligned features of all its components mentioned above.

- Outcomes, Assessment and grading system was designed and defined by module coordinator of University of Bradford. The module coordinator showed flexibility in changing it according to module of Pakistani educational institute.
- Context problems also occurred.

4.0 Proposed Methodology (Mapping and comparing PEM and Constructive Alignment theory)

We have mapped and compared features of all components of our PEM and Constructive alignment theory (Figure 2)

- Comparison and mapping of aligning of outcomes.
- Comparison/Mapping of aligning assessment for subject/general.
- Comparison and mapping of aligning of curriculum.
- Comparison and mapping of aligning of resources.
- Comparison and mapping of aligning of feedback and evaluation.

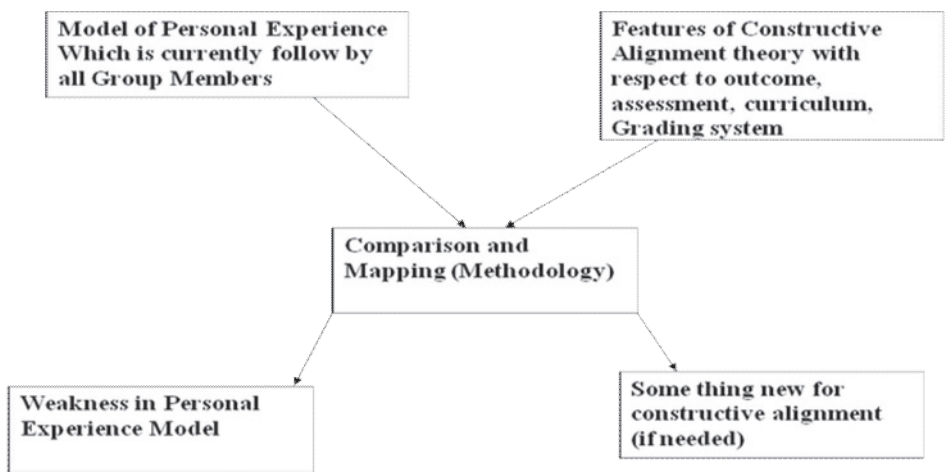

Figure 2 Mapping and comparing PEM and Constructive Alignment theory

5.0 Conclusion and future work

- Implementation of Constructive Alignment theory is not easy, because aligning features for each component (such as assessment, curriculum etc) vary with nature of module as well module coordinator.

- Higher Education (HE) consultants should design benchmark of aligning features to decrease the initial work load and reduce the time.
- HE consultant should define pool of aligning features with respect to different disciplines.
- HE consultant should conduct survey to welcome the formative assessment conducted by coordinator of different modules.
- Like other standards of different fields, HE authorities should define the list of possible ILO and their relevant activities.

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